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AN ILLINOIS QUARANTINE ORDER ISSUED IN
1801.

Belleville, Illinois, Dec. 8, 1911.

MRS. JESSIE PALMER WEBER,
Sec'y. Illinois State Historical Society,
Springfield, Ill.

ESTEEMED LADY:

Your communication of the 2nd of this month, in reference to a quarantine order found in the old records of this county and the request for a description thereof for the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, also to give theories I may have in mind about its history, is at hand.

Will say in reply, that the order bears date May 6th, 1801, and was made by the Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace, a court of record of St. Clair County, Indiana Territory.

For the purpose of correcting an error made by a number of writers about the early court of Illinois, I will say that the Court of Quarter Sessions was a separate and distinct court and not the popular appellation of the Court of Common Pleas, as those writers state. That these were separate courts is apparent from the commissions issued to the judges and clerks thereof and from the dockets kept by each court, which are among the old records of this county. It appears that the Court of Quarter Sessions had criminal jurisdiction and in addition, attended to the public business, now entrusted to the County Boards.

The Court of Common Pleas had jurisdiction of civil suits.

John Deemoulin, James Lemen and J. Francois Perrey were the "Esquires." The court was held at Cahokia.

The order reads as follows:

"It is Ordered that a Guard be placed at the upper and Lower ferrys so as to Keep off the Plague of the Small Pox that now rages on the Spanish Side.....

It is ordered that there shall be two Malitia men at each ferry.....placed as Guards.

Ordered that all person or persons which will cross over to the Spanish Side, shall pay a fine of Six Dollars for the first fault and the person or persons aiding to ferry him, her or them over, Six Dollars each; and for the second fault twelve dollars and two days imprisonment; and shall Remain in prison till her or they pays their fine.

Ordered that any persons offering to cross from the Spanish Side here shall pay a fine of twenty four Dollars and imprisonment till they pay docters the fine.

Ordered also that the above fines shall be distributed and applied in the manner following..... One third of the fine to the Informers, one third to the Guard, and one third to the County.

Ordered that the ferrymen shall have all their Canoes brought on the Rigolet and Keep but one Canoe to cross such people as works to remain on the Spanish Side.

That any bringing over goods or other property Coming from the Spanish Side will be confiscated and applied to the above mentioned fine.

Ordered that the above Rules be in force from this Evening.....All Boats, Canoes and all property Coming from the upper part of the mississippi shall not be permitted to Come here without making a quarrentine at the upper End of St. Cabaret."

As for "theories I may have in mind about its history" I am inclined to think while the order was made for protection, there then existed a rivalry between the residents of the opposite banks of the big river.

I find that in May 1792 the Court of Quarter Sessions St. Clair County, Territory of the United States North West of the Ohio River, at Cahokia, entered the following order:

"From the presentations of the Grand Jury it is ordered that a polite letter be wrote to the commander of St. Louis requesting him to forbid the subjects of Spain from crossing the indians from our side to the St. Louis side. We having a ferry established for this village."

At a time prior to this, 1789, "Orders had been received from New Orleans by the Lieutenant Governor of St. Louis for him to make every difficulty possible with the people of this side so that they might thereby be forced to go and live on the other." One of the difficulties referred to was to incite the Indians. Gov. Miro of the Spanish territory issued a proclamation offering land gratis and other attractions to all new comers. This, with some other causes, almost depleted Kaskaskia. From 500 whites and 500 slaves in 1778, it dwindled down to 44 families in 1790.

Be it said to the credit of the people of Cahokia that they "held the fort" and refused to be either terrified or bribed into abandoning it. Their loyalty was in a measure rewarded, for in 1790 Cahokia was the metropolis of the west, as well as the bulwark of peace, order and good government. They stood by the ship until the waters submerged the flag staff. Its heroism is worthy of a better fate.

Respectfully yours,
FRANK PERRIN.